

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED to the

S O C I E T I E S

F O R

Reformation of Manners;

A T

SALTERS-HALL,

O N

Monday, the 28th of June, 1731.

By JOSEPH BURROUGHS.

Publish'd at their Request.

L O N D O N:

Printed for E. MATTHEWS, at the *Bille* in
Pater-Noster-Row. M.DCC.XXXI.

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Monday, the 28th of June, 1781.

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Printed for E. Matthews, at the Bible in
St. Pauls Church-yard, near the New-Exchange.

P R O V. XIV. 34.

*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but
sin is a reproach to any people.*

WHatever tends to encourage the minds of those who are engag'd in a good work, or to fortify them against any reproach they unjustly suffer, tends to promote the work it self. Even the calling to remembrance such thoughts as have at any former time given us a rational satisfaction in what we have undertaken, is useful towards the quickning our zeal, and confirming our resolution to go on. And this is what I now chiefly propose to my self. 'Tis to put you in mind of what you very well know: that the practice of righteousness has a direct tendency to the welfare of the community, as well as of particular persons and families; and that the indulging of vice, or neglecting to take proper measures for restraining it, tends to the ruin of society.

The text I have chosen is well suited to such a design. And it cannot be amiss to observe, that they are the words of him, whom the scripture has marked out as *the wise man* by way of eminency: who when he was encouraged to ask of God whatever he most desir'd, chose wisdom, preferring it to all the advantages of this world; and received an assurance

rance from heaven, that † *because he had not asked long life, or riches, or the life of his enemies, but had asked for himself wisdom and knowledge to judge the people, and to discern between good and bad; therefore God had given him a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like him before him, neither after him should any arise like unto him.* They are the words of an experienc'd king: who being rais'd to a throne in his youth, had thro' a long reign the advantage of observing what were the steps by which a nation is advanc'd, and what those measures which tend to its ruin. He it is, who pronounces in our text, that *righteousness exalteth a nation, and that sin is a reproach to any people.* But instead of desiring you to be guided by the authority even of *Solomon* himself; I shall make it my business to enquire into the truth of what he affirms, by considering the reasons which support it; after having first given a brief explication of the words.

Righteousness we see is oppos'd to *sin*; which is properly the breach of a law. The wise man therefore had in his mind a regard to a law: and 'tis plain it must be that law to which every intelligent rational being is subject; that law which God has implanted in the natures of men throughout all nations of the world; which law is violated by doing any thing that is really evil in itself. *Righteousness* comprehends all those things which are good intrinsically, and known by men in general to be so;

† 1 Kings iii. 5---12. 2 Chron. i. 7---12.

such as are agreeable to the condition in which men are placed, and the relations which they bear to each other, and to the supreme governor of all. This *righteousness*, he affirms, *exalteth a nation*: i. e. makes it really prosperous and powerful; has this tendency in its own nature; and in the ordinary course of things will increase the prosperity and greatness of a people, as it will give their neighbours a high esteem of them, and make them court their favour. The large view which the wise man has before him when he speaks of *exalting a nation*, and which he more fully discovers in the next words, where he declares that *sin is a reproach to any people*, shews that he did not by *righteousness* mean whatever shall happen to be enacted by the magistrate's authority; or imagine that the mere enacting any thing into a law, can make the practice tend to a nation's advantage. He plainly signifies his judgment, that there is in the nature of things a difference between *righteousness* and *sin*, good and evil, whether that difference be regarded by human laws or not; and that if *iniquity be set up by a law*, it will be a *reproach* to that people, as certainly as if they practis'd it while the law of the land declar'd against it.

Sin in general being opposed to *righteousness*, must mean a deviation from such a course of life as it is every man's duty to follow, and taking such measures as mankind in general know to be wrong. And when it is affirm'd that this is a *reproach to any people*; such a reproach must be meant, as tends to depress a nation just in the same way as *righteousness exalts it*: which is, not
merely

merely in the opinion of its neighbours, tho' that is plainly included ; but in the very nature of things. That people, according to the natural course of things, will be more happy, which is so wise as to be righteous, than that which abandons itself to vice : and men in general have such a knowledge of the difference between right and wrong, that they will see any nation to be so much the more feeble within itself, by how much the more they observe it encouraging vice in its general practice.

Thus much I think is sufficient to explain the meaning of the text. I now proceed to prove the truth of it : which I propose to do chiefly by entring into the reason of the thing.

And here I observe ; that if in any country the people have no regard to virtue, they will have no regard to the public good, but each only to his own private advantage, in opposition to the public, and in destroying of one another ; whereas they who restrain themselves in such things as are inconsistent with virtue, do by that very thing contribute to the public good, even when they are not particularly thinking on it : and consequently the general practice of virtue in a nation would be the strength of that nation.

The reasons which support this remark, are mutual affection and confidence, and the good opinion of neighbours, grounded upon the best security that can be given. If the members of a community in general give one another a just ground for respect and confidence, they will mutually enjoy it : for the meanest of the people,
when

when they see the course of a man's life to be good, will be able to judge that such an one is more worthy of their respect than a vicious profligate, and that it is safer to trust him in any of the concerns of life. And besides that by this mutual respect and confidence they will be strengthened within themselves: it is impossible for the generality of a nation to shew in their manner of living a propension to virtue, and a hatred or contempt of base and vicious practices, without gaining the esteem of their neighbours, and having their friendship courted: as on the other hand it cannot be avoided that that people should fall into the contempt of the nations round about them, who shew a general propension to softness and luxury; it cannot be avoided that a nation should incur the hatred of all about them, a hatred mix'd with jealousy, if they shew a prevailing inclination to fraud and injustice among themselves.

But there is no need of hostilities from without, to ruin a people addicted to vice, and unrestrain'd in the practice of it. They must of course destroy themselves. And even those who think themselves too wise to admit of a religious principle into their hearts, are sensible of this: as appears by their acknowledging the necessity of laws. Yet it is certain that no human laws can ever lay so effectual restraints upon vice, as a sense of religion towards God: and abundantly evident, that nothing in the world can so surely lead men to the practice of that justice and benevolence which secure respect and affection. This principle will secure a right behaviour

viour in men towards each other, and thereby strengthen the bands of society, and so in its own nature tend to raise up a people to a considerable degree of prosperity: besides that there is reason to hope for a special blessing from the supreme governor of all, upon a people which discovers a reverent respect to him; as it is certain that he must approve of them, and take that delight in them which his uniform regard to righteousness and holiness will not suffer him to take in a wicked people.

And of such importance to the exaltation and happiness of a community, is the divine approbation and blessing; that I should have discours'd somewhat largely on this head, were it not that the tendencies of virtue and vice in their own nature are more visible and obvious to common observation than the dispensations of Providence; which sometimes, for special reasons, suffers good and virtuous men to be oppress'd, while very wicked men abound in prosperity. Yet these inequalities in Providence are much more frequent with regard to particular persons than whole communities. For which there is this good reason to be given; that particular persons can best be rewarded or punished in a future state, according as the course of their actions has been in this: so that if good men suffer here in the calamity of a wicked people, they can be made amends by a particular following judgment of their whole behaviour; whereas the present seems to be the only state in which a community can be rewarded or punish'd, according as vice or virtue prevail most in it.

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But tho' I will not allow myself to enlarge here; yet I cannot leave this train of thoughts without observing, that there are in Scripture many remarkable instances of the conduct of Providence towards communities of men, which may teach us to expect that the most High will spare or punish a people, according as he sees that which is really good, or that which in its own nature is evil, to prevail among them.

Not to mention the destruction of the old world by a flood, which yet we are expressly told was, *a because the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*; the very reason assign'd for the turning Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbouring cities into a lake of fire, was *b because their cry was great, and their sin grievous*. And we find moreover, that if there had been *c ten righteous persons in Sodom*, the whole city had been saved for their sake. To the same purpose is that most remarkable expression of the Almighty to Abraham, concerning his own posterity, Gen. xv. 16. *In the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full*. They were not yet arriv'd at that height of wickedness which God foresaw they would attain in some generations more; and, sinful as they were, he was determin'd to spare them till it would be no longer fitting to continue such a people in being. The like reason is frequently assign'd for the destruction of the Canaanites in general; *d the abominations with which they had*

^a Gen. vi. 5.

^b Ch. xviii. 20.

^c Ibid. 32.

^d Lev. xviii. 28.

defiled the land. 'Twas owing to these that the land is said to have *spewed out* its inhabitants, to make way for the *Jews*: and the *Jews* were ^a warned not to commit the like, *lest it spew them out also*. And nothing is more evident, than that the threatnings denounced against this people in case of their disobedience to the divine laws, were remarkably fulfill'd in the several periods of their history; but more especially in the final destruction of their polity, when they had filled up the measure of their iniquity, practising all manner of vice with a high hand, and shutting their eyes against the greatest light, while they pretended to be *the temple of the Lord*, and boasted of being his peculiar people. Their consummate wickedness, and the severe punishment of it, are well described by *Josephus*, when he assures us, that ^b "to relate particularly all their iniquities would be impossible; but in a few words it might be said, that never any city suffer'd so much, and that from the beginning of the world never was any generation of men more fruitful of wickedness." And it is a well known passage of the same author, where he declares his opinion, that ^c "if the *Romans* had delay'd to execute vengeance upon these sinners, either the city would have been swallow'd up by an opening of the earth, or overwhelmed by a flood, or destroyed by fire from heaven like *Sodom*; for it brought forth a much more impious generation of men than those who suffer'd these

^a Lev. xviii. 28.

^b De Bell. Jud. l. v. c. 10. edit. Hudson.

^c Ibid. c. 13.

" things.

“ things.” I might farther observe, that many nations, whose destruction is particularly foretold by the Prophets; as the *Babylonians*, *Isa.* xlvii. the *Moabites*, *Jerem.* xlviii. the *Tyrians*, *Ezek.* xxviii. and others, too tedious to enumerate, have their ruin denounced expressly on account of their abounding in sin.

But to return to the natural tendencies of vice and virtue: whatever advantages a community may seem at present to enjoy by the prevailing of some vices, or to fail of by suppressing those vices; yet a little consideration will shew that it is their real interest to cultivate virtue, even tho’ the generality of the nations about them, at present more powerful than themselves, should be remarkably vicious.

’Tis sufficient for this purpose that men have, however they came by it, a general notion of the difference between good and evil, especially in flagrant instances; and find it a difficult matter, if not impossible, altogether to get rid of it. While this sense of things remains, even a small community, known to be cultivators of virtue, will make it the interest of all its neighbours to court its favour and alliance; and is in just so much the less danger of being overthrown while surrounded even with wicked nations its neighbours, by how much the clearer proofs it gives of its steady regard to virtue in the generality of its members, and in the rules of its government. And the reason is, because so far as the power of this community will go, it is safe to depend upon it; whereas if a people remark’d for treachery possess’d the same

territory, it would be the interest of any one of two powerful contending neighbours, to expel the inhabitants, and people the country with others in their room, or even to let it lie waste.

I do not pretend by what I have been saying, to expect the perfection of virtue in communities of people : but only signify, that in proportion to the regard any nation has to virtue in general, so it is the stronger, both in reality within itself, and likewise in the esteem of its neighbours. And for this I may safely appeal to history : where I believe it will be found, that those nations which have extended their conquests the most widely, have always found it easiest to subdue those who had soften'd themselves by luxury, or who by their injurious conduct had made themselves hated by their neighbours ; and most difficult to overcome those, who as a nation had enjoy'd the best character for integrity and industry. I believe it will likewise be found, that those nations which have made a prey of others, have been enabled to do it chiefly by the help of some virtues, for which they were as really praise-worthy, as for their ambition justly to be condemn'd.

But in as much as *private vices* have met with such advocates as affirm them to be *public benefits* ; let us consider what pretence of a reason they have on their side. And surely a brief enquiry of this kind cannot be unsuitable to the design of societies erected on purpose for the *discouraging of vice and immorality*. One writer in particular has made himself very famous in this cause ; by publishing under the name of
a *Fable*

a *Fable* and *Remarks* upon it, an apology for all manner of vice. And the greediness with which such principles are still suck'd in, the mischief they continue to do, and their direct tendency to destroy all good morals, will, I hope, be some excuse for my considering upon this occasion the substance of what has been often answer'd already.

'Tis in vain by a few expressions thrown in for a blind, to pretend any serious regard to virtue; when pains are taken to sap the very foundation of the difference between good and evil, by ascribing the origin of moral virtue to state policy; when it is affirm'd, that "the hunting after the *pulchrum & honestum* is not much better than a wild goose chase, that is but little to be depended upon;" and that "the excellency and worth of things is most commonly precarious and alterable, as modes and customs vary." 'Tis to very little purpose for a man to pretend that "he lays it down as a first principle, that in all societies, great or small, it is the duty of every member of it to be good, that virtue ought to be encourag'd, vice discountenanc'd, the laws obey'd, and the transgressors punish'd;" and that, "in order to aggrandize a nation, the *meum & tuum* must be secur'd, crimes punish'd, and all other laws concerning the administration of justice, wisely contriv'd and strictly executed;" when it is easily seen, that he palliates the vices he speaks of, and labours to bring the virtues

^a *Fable of the Bees*, Part I. edit. 4. p. 27—44.

^c 394, 395.

^d 255.

^e 116.

^f 380.

into

into contempt; when by the manner in which he treats some vices, he strives to recommend them to his readers liking instead of his displeasure; when he considers it as a ^a point of wisdom to connive at the faults of the grossly vicious, as a means of preserving virtue in others; when throughout his whole work he labours to prove that there is no such thing as benevolence; and ^b expressly affirms "that it is impossible we should be sociable creatures without hypocrisy." Indeed there is some satisfaction in meeting with so many assertions of this last kind, in favour of dissimulation, as antidotes against the rest of the work. For hereby the author gives up all just claim of being thought to be in earnest in any thing he writes or says.

But, to pass over whatever is personal: the making state policy to be *the origin of moral virtue*, besides that it excludes intirely the thought of a divine being as supreme governor and judge, is a mere visionary scheme, and a begging of the question. Who were those original politicians, that instructed this *untaught animal*, man, and persuaded him to ^c *conquer rather than indulge his appetites*, for the public good? Who were those ancient ^d *civilizers of mankind*, who "were forced to contrive an imaginary reward, as a general equivalent for the trouble of self-denial?" And how came all the *lawgivers and other wise men* in the several ages of the world so exactly to agree? And further, how came they to hope that they should prevail, in persuading men to the practice of virtue, if there

^a 95—99.^b 401.^c 28.^d 29.

was no foundation for it in nature, and in the general sense which all mankind have of the difference between good and evil? If it be said, that *flattery* would do the work; and that the praising of human nature, and talking of its dignity above that of other animals, would make men comply with every thing that should be desir'd; still the question returns, how does that superior dignity appear? Wherein do we differ from them so remarkably, as in that reason and judgment, which assure us, that there are, antecedently to all laws and contracts, some things in their own nature good and right and fit to be observ'd, and other things really evil and to be avoided? Allowing that the practice of virtue tends to the good of society, which is indeed the thing I contend for: yet why shall this conduciveness to the public welfare, be made the very essence of virtue, even to the exclusion of moral fitness; when it could never at all have enter'd into the notion of virtue, if it had not itself been visible from the nature of things?

The moral virtues are something very different from what such writers would make us believe. They are founded in the nature of things; and not of such a precarious kind as to change with modes and customs. There is a fitness of performing certain actions, arising from the consideration of our frame and constitution, from the condition in which God has placed us, and the relations we bear to him and to his creatures: a fitness visible even to those who are bent to break in upon it. And by what means soever

some whole communities have been brought into the practice of very unbecoming actions; which those who are acquainted with the Scripture, cannot be at a loss to account for; yet the force of truth has extorted confessions to this purpose from those very men who labour to prove the contrary. Else what can be meant by ^a “laying it down as a principle, that every “member of a society should be *good*?” How come any *qualities* to be ^b *good and amiable, or bad and hateful*? What are those ^c *real virtues*, which man is suppos’d to be “capable of acquiring by reason and self-denial?” What is ^d “that *noble action*, which a man is conscious of having perform’d, and for which he “expects the *reward of glory*?” and what account shall we give of the politician’s definition of virtue; that it is “every performance, by “which man, contrary to the impulse of his nature, should endeavour the benefit of others, “or the conquest of his own passions, out of a “*rational ambition of being good*?”

If the ambition of *being good*, is *rational*, and *reason* is any part of our make, or does any way belong to us as men; how is it *contrary to nature*? and why shall it not rather be acknowledged to have its foundation in nature?

Indeed, this author’s scheme, whereby he accounts for the rise of society ^f from savages, gives a very different account of human nature. It makes animal instinct the ruling principle, notwithstanding that reason with which mankind is

^a 255. ^b 395.
^f Part 2. p. 224, &c.

^c 428.

^d 41.

^e 34.

endued, and which one would think could never by a wise being be given to be subservient to appetite. It is evident that we are a composition of reason and appetite : and if our nature is to be denominated from the one of these, it should surely be from the principal part rather than from the inferior. Consequently 'tis injuring and debasing human nature in the vilest manner, and casting the most odious reflection upon its author, to make the indulging animal appetite without the restraints of reason, very nature itself. Let a man therefore talk ever so plausibly, and acknowledge now and then, in opposition to his whole scheme, that virtue is to be encourag'd, and vice to be punish'd : yet the making all virtue contrary to nature, and vice to be very nature itself, which is the abuse and perversion of nature, is pleading the cause of vice. And if all vice be contrary to that principle of reason and judgment which we find within us : then let its advocates complain as loudly as they will, *that moralists represent mankind not as they are, but as what they should be* ; yet it will appear to sober minds that vice is unnatural, that it is a perversion of nature from the purposes for which men were form'd, and that those who are the happy means of reclaiming the vicious, and reducing them to the paths of virtue, perform the kindest office to their fellow creatures, and are happily instrumental towards restoring the natural order of things.

But to proceed. The doctrine of moral fitness being intirely left out of the scheme for *the origin of virtue* ; something else must be substituted

ruted in its room. And that is pride. We are
 told ^a that "the nearer we search into human
 " nature, the more we shall be convinc'd, that
 " the moral virtues are the political offspring
 " which flattery begot upon pride." The whole
 of virtue, it seems, is mere state policy: and
 pride is the main wheel of the political engine.
 " Pride (if we will believe these writers) ^b is so
 " inseparable from man's essence, that without
 " it the compound he is made of, would want
 " one of its chiefest ingredients." And in con-
 sidering the influence it has upon human ac-
 tions, 'tis affirm'd that ^c "the great recompence
 " in view, for which the most exalted minds
 " have with so much alacrity sacrificed their
 " quiet, health, sensual pleasures, and every inch
 " of themselves, has never been any thing else,
 " but the breath of man, the aërial coin of
 " praise:" and that ^d "to define the reward of
 " glory in the amplest manner, the most that
 " can be said of it, is, that it consists in a su-
 " perlative felicity which a man, who is con-
 " scious of having perform'd a noble action, en-
 " joys in self-love, whilst he is thinking on the
 " applause he expects from others."

But it is easy to observe; that in all the great
 things affirm'd concerning pride, and particu-
 larly in the making it inseparable from human
 nature, that ambition which is really praise-
 worthy, is confounded with the vice of pride;
 and that the best argument produced for proving
 that pride is at the foundation of every noble ac-
 tion, is that ^e because it is possible great accom-

^a Part 1. p. 37.

^b 31.

^c 40.

^d 41.

^e Part 2. p. 61.
 plishments

plishments may be the cover of pride, therefore they certainly are so. But this is a miserable argument: especially considering that it is applied to all men in all cases, without excepting the best actions they are capable of performing. And has this author so deeply penetrated into the hearts of all men, as to know that they are as bad as his own? Besides: who sees not that there are some actions really praise-worthy, and in which it becomes us to encourage ambition? And what can be the foundation of this ambition, if there be no course of action in its own nature fit to be chosen? What then is it that excites this ambition within us; or this pride, if you will needs call it by that name? Is there not some sense of a thing's being really good and worthy to be chosen? No, it seems: it is only because others will think it deserves praise; not that it really does so. But then, how come we to imagine that others will think we deserve to be prais'd upon performing such or such actions? Is it not from the general sense which all mankind are suppos'd to have of what is good in itself, what is becoming? And should not the thought of what is becoming, and the following that in the course of action, be from our most early days encourag'd in us? What if some of those to whom the care of children is committed, do commend things which are not to be commended, and instead of encouraging a virtuous ambition, do really encourage the vice of pride? Still that will never make the virtue and the vice to be the same thing.

As to the principle of self-love, upon which this whole scheme is built; 'tis the light in which it is placed, to the exclusion of benevolence, that makes it exceptionable and hurtful. No doubt it is a principle within us to seek our own happiness. And yet this principle is very consistent with the most sincere benevolence to others, and with the performing an action from the inward sense of its being fit and proper to be done. If indeed the giving up any thing to our neighbour that could create pleasure or advantage to ourselves, were totally inconsistent with our being happy: then the principle of self-love, and that of benevolence, could not remain in the same subject; and then neither could it any way appear fit for us to concede the least trifle to each other. But such is not our condition. Besides that we may do much good to our neighbours without the least injury to ourselves, and take a rational delight in it; we may suffer many things for the benefit of the public, which may be our advantage upon the whole; and which, without considering them as our advantage, we may from the condition wherein we are placed, and the relation we bear to each other, acknowledge are fit to be expected from us. There is no need of excluding any one of the principles just now mention'd when we entertain the other: and any of them, even that which we call the selfish principle, where it breaks not in upon the rights of others, and does not interfere with reverence and affection to the supreme being, is a good and useful principle, closely connected with, and not

to be distinguish'd from, our natural duty, that respect which we owe to ourselves and those who depend on us. 'Tis therefore at best but trifling, to set one of these principles at variance with another: and worse than trifling, to endeavour to place the benevolent principle in ^a a ridiculous light. However 'tis a satisfaction to observe, that such attempts, while they contradict what every good man feels in his own mind, prove only the want of real goodness in their authors. All their labours extend not a whit further: nor will they ever convince a man who is conscious of having performed a benevolent action, from a sense of its fitness for him to perform, that he propos'd nothing more than an advantage to himself.

It is no wonder, if from such false principles as these, false conclusions are made about the influence of virtue and vice upon society. 'Tis own'd in general, that virtue promotes the happiness of particular persons, and that vice is hurtful to them. 'Tis acknowledg'd that virtue contributes to peace of mind and health of body; and that vice, besides injuring both, does in abundance of cases impair the estate, and ruin private families. Yet it is insisted on that vice is for the advantage of society upon the whole; and not only so, but that it is necessary to its happiness. The only shelter for all the extravagant things of this kind, is the ^b distinction between a populous, rich, wide, extended kingdom, and a small indigent state or principality, poorly inhabited. Virtue, it seems, may live

^a Vid. Part 2. p. 20, 24, 25, 33.

^b Part 1. p. 254.

in both : And 'tis allowed ^a " that a man may
 " be virtuous, even in a rich and mighty king-
 " dom : " but it is denied " that any society can
 " be raised into such a rich and mighty king-
 " dom, or so rais'd, subsist in their wealth and
 " power, without the vices of man."

It cannot be expected that in the compass of
 a single discourse I should consider all the virtues
 and vices, and their particular tendencies. It
 will be sufficient to treat expressly of two vices,
 prodigality and luxury : and in discoursing of
 them, there will be occasion for mentioning
 some others, and their opposite virtues, by the
 bye. But I therather choose to treat of these two
 vices in particular, because there seems to be
 more than ordinary need of cautioning the pre-
 sent generation against them.

The cause of prodigality is pleaded, and its
 opposite virtue ridicul'd, in the following words:
 " ^b Frugality is, like honesty, a mean starv-
 " ing virtue, that is only fit for small societies
 " of good peaceable men, who are contented
 " to be poor, so they may be easy : but in a
 " large stirring nation you may soon have e-
 " nough of it. 'Tis an idle, dreaming virtue,
 " that employs no hands, and therefore very
 " useless in a trading country, where there are
 " vast numbers that one way or other must all
 " be set to work. Prodigality has a thousand
 " inventions to keep people from sitting still,
 " that frugality would never think of: and as this
 " must consume a prodigious wealth ; so avarice
 " again knows innumerable tricks to rake it

^a p. 255.

^b 105, 106.

“ together, which frugality would scorn to
“ make use of.”

But 'tis a proof of a prodigious blindness of mind to argue in this manner : as if they who were the farthest from the character of the prodigal, neither had nor could have any other quality in them besides that of being frugal; and consequently that the men of this turn of mind could never enrich or strengthen a nation : whereas every one sees, that for the most part they who are frugal are likewise industrious, and that sloth and indolence are the companions of prodigality. When therefore we are enquiring whether it is for the good of a community that such a vice as prodigality should be practis'd in it ; the question is not, whether the frugality of some will of itself employ so many hands in a nation, as the prodigality of others : but whether a national disposition to frugality will not naturally bring along with it such a train of virtues, as shall enrich and strengthen the people, more than a disposition to prodigality. Men of a frugal turn of mind are very likely to enrich and strengthen their country by their industry, in cultivating its lands, and in a diligent application to commerce : whereas, if prodigality prevails, neither can the lands be till'd, nor commerce kept up, nor any measures taken for the public welfare ; since the increase of this vice will effectually prevent a nation's having either heads to contrive, or hands to execute any useful design. And how needful it is to warn men against this evil, is visible from observing, that the example of prodigality in
some

some few whose estates at present are able to support it, is too apt to spread itself to many who are not ; to create a ruinous custom among the people of aiming at what is altogether unsuitable to their condition ; and to drive them to the most unrighteous and violent measures to prevent their sinking. Thus does prodigality naturally lead men to the opposite vice of avarice for its support ; whereas frugality and industry enable a man to be liberal : and many of this character have been known to be in this very respect the most readily dispos'd to the public good ; as by their application to thought and business they are likely to be most fit to contrive for it, and by their temperance to keep themselves in a condition to promote it.

'Tis therefore a very vain thing for a man, when he calls prodigality *a noble sin*^a, and endeavours to shew its usefulness to society, to say^b " he does not mean that prodigality which has avarice for its companion." For even the *heedless and voluptuous men*, when once by their prodigality they have stripp'd themselves ; tho' they are of a character very different from that of the miser, who gathers money only that he may hoard it up ; will yet of course, (according to the principle of^c *looking upon the necessaries of life as their due whether they work or not*,) betake themselves to any measures whereby they may supply that prodigality which they have been accusom'd to indulge. And consequently the more this vice increases, the more mischief it must do to society.

^a p. 10.^b 103.^c 101.

Luxury is very near of kin to prodigality. And if you take this vice in its largest extent, nothing is more evident than that it is ruinous to a nation in its strength and influence, how much soever it may in some respects increase its politeness. 'Tis indeed affirm'd, that ^a "with a wise administration all people may swim in as much foreign luxury as their product can purchase, without being impoverish'd by it." But they who talk at this rate, do not consider that it is impossible an administration should long continue wise and fit for government, where luxury becomes a national vice. Where this evil prevails among governors and people; 'tis in vain to think of having ^b "*meum & tuum* secur'd, crimes punish'd, and all other laws concerning the administration of justice, wisely contriv'd and strictly executed;" in vain to hope that ^c "foreign affairs shall be prudently managed, or necessary measures taken, such as policy and the balance of power direct." Men may affirm if they will, that ^d "these arts lead so surely to worldly greatness, that what sovereign power soever makes a good use of them, cannot fail of making the nation flourish; and that no luxury or other vice is ever able to shake their constitution." But there is no such thing in nature as the making a good use of the arts of government, in a nation where luxury prevails. For the prevalence of this evil, not only softens the people in general, weakening them both in body and mind, drawing off their attention from any thing that is good, set-

^a 124.^b 116.^c *ibid.*^d *ibid.*

cling careless habits within them, and disabling them from any laborious service; but “infatuates the governors themselves, making them depart from either all or some of the general maxims” this very author lays down: which infatuation he himself ^a acknowledges to be a cause sufficient to bring an empire to ruin. And this is a truth abundantly confirm’d in history. He tells us indeed, ^b “that what is put to the account of luxury, belongs to mal-administration, and is the fault of bad politics; and that every government ought to be thoroughly acquainted with, and stedfastly to pursue the interest of the country.” But this stedfastness is never to be expected in such as give up themselves to luxury. Nor has this author done any thing towards removing the charge which himself mentions against this vice; that it ^c “encreases avarice and rapine, and by corrupting those who should serve the public, makes the country every moment in danger of being betray’d to the highest bidders:” he has nowhere attempted to shew, that it will always be the interest and inclination of such persons to continue in their own country, and to keep it from being subject to another people.

If it be alledg’d, that there have been examples of very able governors who have been luxuriously given: I answer, that they laid the foundation of their great knowledge before they were overtaken with this vice; and that those of the most consummate abilities, if in the affluence of fortune they gave way to luxury, and taught

^a 117.^b 114, 115.^c 114.

their children the love of it, have by that very means prevented the making any of them good governors, and left that honour generally speaking to such as train'd up their families in a more sober way. If a people has been happy for a while under luxurious governors: besides that it had been more happy if the influence of their example in private life had not done mischief; the people's happiness was owing, not to the luxury of their governors, but to some very different causes: and all the wisdom and fidelity of governors has never been able to prevent the ruin of a community, where the people in general have been for any length of time addicted to this vice. And what if in ^a military affairs wisdom of conduct be the chief requisite in officers? what if some very great generals have had little strength of body, and some of these have enfeebled themselves by their own vices? yet what condition would a people be in for defending themselves against a foreign power, if they could furnish none but an army of broken constitutions? Besides, with regard to their leaders themselves, and likewise the conductors of affairs at home; would not the very same persons be more useful, who with the same degree of knowledge, preserv'd their natural vigour by temperance? Would not indeed their knowledge in all probability be more extensive, if their vices did not hinder its increase? But even with the same knowledge, would not the influence of their example be vastly more useful to the public? Which tended most to the strength and glory of the *Roman* state? the politeness, the

elegancy, and luxurious entertainments of a *Lucullus*; or the temperance and self-denial of a *Scipio*? Allowing them both to have been of the highest rank of abilities, both for council and for war; yet whose example would do most service to the rising generation in seasoning the minds of youth? and which of the two would have the strongest influence for creating esteem in the minds of neighbouring powers?

Let it therefore be taken for granted, that luxury will in some respects increase politeness: the question is, whether a nation may not dispense with the absence of some elegancies, and yet be very polite, and more happy without than with them. There is no necessity of becoming savages, to avoid luxury. Allowing only a medium between the two extremes, the living upon such things as are readiest at hand and absolutely necessary for life, and the craving of every thing which may yield delight; yet many things that are really useful may be exchanged between distant nations. They may be very helpful to each other, the one possessing what the other has not, without running into all the extravagancies of an indulged fancy. Men may indeed indulge their fancies to an extreme, not only in those things which are imported from abroad, but in the product of their own country. This may become a national disease, and bring ill consequences along with it: these ill consequences may be attended with some benefits for a while, by means of a wise administration: and above all, the divine Providence may over-rule the worst actions, so as to answer useful purposes by their means. But this is no rea-

son why luxury or any other vice should be look'd upon as an advantage to society upon the whole; or any proof that the vices themselves are not upon the whole pernicious.

Having thus consider'd the natural tendency of vice to distress a nation; give me leave now to produce an example from holy writ. And none can be more proper than that of *Solomon* himself; from whose deliberate thoughts and most serious reflexions the words of my text are taken. His own description of his proceedings you have, *Eccl. ii. 3--10. I fought in my heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting my heart with wisdom, (i. e. allowing himself now and then a serious thought) and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven, all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits. I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees. I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house. Also I had great possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men; as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me: (i. e. he had not quite lost it, otherwise he had never returned to serious reflexion.) And whatsoever mine eyes desired,*

fired, I kept not from them: I with-held not my heart from any joy. He might have added, what is recorded in his^a history, that *he had seven hundred wives, princeſſes; and three hundred concubines; and that his wives turned away his heart after other gods.* But beſides this perverting of his own judgment; and beſides his making idolatry a national ſin, by building high places for all the gods which his wives worſhip'd; look a little further into his hiſtory, and you will ſee, that his extravagance had the moſt dreadful effect upon the next generation, by bringing a burden upon them which they were not able to bear, notwithſtanding the immenſe riches he had imported from foreign parts: as to which it is ſaid of him, ^b *that he made ſilver to be in Jeruſalem as ſtones, and cedars as the ſycamore-trees that are in the vale for abundance.*

But I will not confine your views to any one vice. And ſince the Scripture is ſo little regarded by thoſe who are in love with vice; I ſhall chooſe to illuſtrate the general doctrine I have been delivering, by the example of a people whoſe hiſtory is univerſally known. I mean the *Roman* people: who as a nation were for many ages remarkable for frugality, induſtry, temperance, fortitude, juſtice, and other virtues, and thereby rais'd themſelves to a very high degree of power, ſo as to be courted by all their neighbours, long before they arriv'd at their greateſt extent of dominion: who were very happy, and ſecure of continuing in ſtrength and influence, while they in any tolerable meaſure practis'd

^a 1 Kings xi. 3, 4.

^b Ch. x. 27.

these virtues; but were afterwards ruin'd by luxury, avarice, and the boundless ambition of power. They ow'd the beginning of their miseries to luxury: which was attended with rapacious violence, as necessary to support it. They were indeed at length prodigiously great in the extent of their empire. But it is evident that this was no real happiness to the *Roman* people, no real accession of strength; that the empire hereby became a burden to itself, and sunk under its own weight.

If any one ask, whether in the more early times of this people there was strict virtue observ'd in all respects: I answer, there was not. But the question is, whether there was not a much greater regard to virtue in general throughout all the time in which they grew really powerful, than afterwards: and whether they could have attain'd that power without that degree of virtue which remain'd with them, and for want of the continuance of which they fell. Particularly; did their luxury increase their strength? Did it really make them great and powerful? Or could it keep them so? Did it not indeed ruin them as a nation?

Let it be allow'd that *Cato* was sometimes too severe in his reflexions; and that in arguing against the repeal of a law which restrain'd expences, he pleaded a very unpopular cause: yet he spoke with perfect good judgment, agreeably to the nature of things, and like a man well vers'd in history, when he told the citizens of *Rome*, that ^a "those two opposite vices, avarice and luxury, under which the state then

^a Liv. xxxiv. 4.

"labour'd,

“ labour’d, were the plagues which had over-
 “ thrown all great empires.” And if the histo-
 rian did not himself make the speech, it was
 with something like the spirit of prophecy that
 he added: ^a “ Therefore, since the fortune of
 “ the republic is daily better and more success-
 “ ful, and its empire increases; and we now
 “ transport our armies into *Greece* and *Asia*,
 “ places fill’d with all manner of allurements for
 “ vicious passions, and even handle regal trea-
 “ sures: so much the more do I dread, lest these
 “ things have rather taken us, than been taken
 “ by us.” How well *Cato’s* fears were ground-
 ed, the historian’s own ^b observation not long
 after, concerning the origin of foreign luxury in
Rome, sufficiently shews. And ^c “ what was
 “ then seen,” he tells us, “ were scarce the seeds
 “ of the luxury which follow’d.” As to the mi-
 series which this vice, together with avarice and
 ambition, brought upon the *Roman* people;
^d *Salust* gives a lively description of ’em, com-
 par’d with the happiness of the same people
 while they cultivated the opposite virtues. And
 yet it is certain, that he did not live to see the
 one half of what the *Romans* suffer’d by means
 of these vices; the accounts whereof we have
 from later authors.

Let us now be just: and ask ourselves, whe-
 ther pride and ambition, prodigality and luxu-
 ry, irregular gratifications of the sensual appe-
 tite, covetousness, perjury, thefts and rapines,
 or any other moral evils that can be nam’d, are
 necessary to make a nation happy, even with

^a Liv. xxxiv. 4.
 c. 10, 11, 12, 13.

^b xxxix. 6.

^c *ibid.*

^d *Bell. Catil.*

regard to wealth and power, such a power as is likely to be lasting and secure; or whether on the other side, a community is not likely to be more powerful in itself, and more respected by its neighbours, by exercising its utmost wisdom to discourage all such disorders. And further, let us ask ourselves, ^a “whether what we call “evil in this world, moral as well as natural, is “*the grand principle* that makes us sociable creatures; and whether the moment evil ceases, “the society must be spoil’d, if not totally dissolved.” If man remaining in innocence had never become ^b *that sociable creature he is now*; yet he would have been sociable in a much better manner and to a better purpose. And now that sin has enter’d into the world; the dissuading men from the love and practice of it, does not at all tend to make them unsociable, does not send them into the wilderness, to lead the life of savages; but teaches them to love one another, and promote each other’s interest, which through the wise goodness of the supreme governor is evidently connected with their own.

To conclude: the whole scheme which I have been opposing, confounds natural and moral evil together. And ’tis a sufficient answer to it, to say: that man’s good qualities in general make him capable of society; that some of them incline him to it; and that the natural evils attending him, or the imperfections of his condition in this world, make society necessary for him: but as to moral evils; tho’ they are such as being kept under some restraint, society may consist with, and tho’ some of them may

^a *Fable of Bees*, p. 428.

^b 395.

be the means of enlarging a community, and may afford the members of it some entertainments which without these evils cannot be come at; yet the supposed advantages gain'd to society by such evils, can never balance the mischief which they bring along with them; and therefore it is for the advantage of every community to prevent them if possible, to restrain them as much as they can, and to do all that is in their power, by degrees to root them out.

And now, there can be no great difficulty to improve what we have heard, to the purpose of our present assembling.

I. We see we are oblig'd to take care that we do not encourage vice by our own example; because that is bringing a *reproach* and a weakness upon the community, so far as our influence reaches. This reflexion concerns all men in every station of life: in a particular manner magistrates, ministers, and all heads of families: but more especially still those in any of these characters, who are voluntary members of REFORMING SOCIETIES. Indeed, all magistrates are by their office reformers of mankind, if they attend to the duties of it, whether they enter into such voluntary Societies or not: so that if they should in the course of their actions break those good laws, for the violation of which they are bound to punish others; they would do a double mischief to that community whose interest they are sworn to promote. If they themselves should practise fraud and injustice; if they should lead dissolute lives; if they should by a habitual profanation of the sacred name of God, contribute to the detracting from the religion of an oath, and

and thereby to the weakening of the strongest ties whereby we can secure each other's fidelity: they would shew themselves unfaithful to, and therefore unworthy of, the trust committed to them; they would prove themselves real enemies to the interest of that society, for the benefit whereof a confidence is placed in them. For the like reason, if they who are to teach others the mind of God, and who are to be *examples to the flock*, should lead them to the practice of *ungodliness and worldly lusts*, instead of encouraging them by their example *to live soberly, righteously, and godlily in the world*: they would have a dreadful account to give to their great master; who came into this world, not to dissolve any moral obligations, but to enforce them, *not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil* their grand design; and whose doctrine particularly directs us to *submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them who are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.* And as for all heads of families: if they suffer gross failings in themselves; it is most evident that they lay the surest foundation for all that *reproach* which *sin* can bring upon a people: the children and servants who see any vice indulg'd by the conduct of their own parents and masters, to whose immediate care they are committed, will be very likely to improve it, till they become harden'd in wickedness: the natural consequence whereof, we have seen, is distressing the community. But if all

^a Mat. v. 17.

^b 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14.

those who profess the Christian doctrine would shew by the course of their actions that they are determin'd to be guided by it: 'tis not to be express'd how much they would hereby contribute to discourage vice, and lessen the number of offenders against the public peace: for there is such a powerful influence in a good course of action, as is almost irresistible. Let every one lay these things to heart; and order his practice accordingly. And especially let all those who have voluntarily become members of *Societies*, erected and maintain'd *for the reformation of manners*, take care that they do not by the course of their actions contradict their profess'd design. I am sure I shall not by this exhortation offend any who are steady in the cause of virtue, and really wish well to the public: and I chose the rather to address it to the members and agents of the SOCIETIES; that by how much the more their enemies are ready to raise ill reports against them, by so much the more they might exercise diligence to shew that the reports are groundless.

II. We see it is agreed on both sides, by those who believe that virtue and vice are distinguish'd in the nature of things, and by those who affirm the difference is imaginary and the mere invention of politicians; on both sides, I say, it is agreed, that virtue should be encourag'd, and vice punish'd. Even they who plead the cause of vice, acknowledge the necessity of restraining it; because they see that if vice be not punish'd in others, they cannot securely enjoy their own sinful pleasures. And all agree, that there is no security to our lawful possessions and rights, without punishing

nishing the invaders of them. The design therefore of your SOCIETIES is both justified and commended by the universal consent of men, not excepting your enemies themselves. The force of truth extorts a commendation from them, even against their wills. But you have a better principle to proceed upon, than their praises: the satisfaction of your own minds, that the work in which you are engag'd, is a good and necessary work; that it is suited to the holy religion you profess, tending to the welfare of society in general, and of those very persons in particular, whose vices you restrain. Let such thoughts encourage you to go on, notwithstanding the difficulties which attend you. Such were the thoughts which occasion'd the forming of your Societies: which, to their eternal honour, prevail'd on persons of the first rank in life, to join with those of a lower degree, and to assist generously with their substance, as well as otherwise to shew their approbation of, the useful design. And such will always be good reasons why you should hope for encouragement from all who are heartily concern'd for the cause of virtue and the welfare of the public, if they be rightly inform'd of the state of the case.

It is indeed evident, that zeal in a good cause is too apt to grow cool. *Tho' 'tis good to be always zealously affected in a good thing*; yet this zealous affection does not in all persons continue steddy and uniform. Many of those who wish well to a good work, after they have been for some time engag'd, begin to grow weary: and when they withdraw, if the work be at-

tended with any difficulty or charge, their places are not easily fill'd up. I am persuaded 'tis owing to this in a great measure, that the burden now lies upon the shoulders of a few. So much the greater is the virtue of their resolution, who still continue to bear it: who are content to endure the trouble and vexation, as well as the expence, of malicious prosecutions, and to begin and carry on such as are righteous and necessary; and who are proof against the coldness of misinform'd friends, as well as the reproach of bitter enemies. So much the more do those magistrates deserve the thanks of the public, who with a persevering zeal continue to disturb the nurseries of vice, and are resolv'd to give them no rest. 'Tis very probable some will call them officious weak men, fond of praise: and there is no doubt that their actions will from such principles as I have been refuting, be ascrib'd wholly to the love of flattery. But I hope they are wiser men than to be mov'd by such slanders; when they see already some good effect of their labours, and have the pleasing prospect of saving thousands of young persons from ruin, by preventing their entrance into such hellish societies. And, with regard to all those who are embark'd in the cause of Reformation; the firm conviction of their own minds, that *righteousness does indeed exalt a nation, and that sin is a reproach to any people*, the strong sense of the good they are doing, or at least the mischief they are preventing, will, I hope, engage them to persevere in what is so agreeable to that holy religion they profess, a religion founded upon the most benevolent principles.

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I am in no fear of a mistake, in recommending from those very principles upon which Christianity is founded, the punishment of those who violate the public peace. Nor is there any need that I should quote the New Testament to prove that the Christian religion encourages and requires it. You are too well acquainted with it, to want such instruction. But give me leave to observe: that whatever may be the inward principle upon which men proceed; yet we are in our course of action oblig'd to make a difference between those whose crimes break in upon the public peace, and those whose writings are levell'd against our religion; and that even our religion itself directs us to treat them in a different manner. The one are to be restrain'd by the hand of public justice: and in contributing hereto, you are exceedingly useful. The other, if we will follow the rules of Christianity, are to be put to silence by wise answers and good lives. If we will go further than this; we shall be at a loss to find directions in the New Testament for our proceeding. 'Tis well worth the while to consider these things: and particularly, they deserve the consideration of your Societies, while so many eyes are upon you; that you may impartially judge what is your province, and be content to act accordingly.

If ever there should be ground of suspicion, that the societies which were set up for reformation of manners, did set up themselves to discourage a free enquiry after truth, instead of restraining, according to the true design of their institution,

institution, those vicious courses for which men can have no pretence of conscience; then it would be no wonder to see men of the most establish'd virtue and good judgment forsake them, or refuse to join with them. But I take it for granted, my brethren, you have been better taught the principles of religion, than to harbour a thought this way. However, since you have so many enemies continually misrepresenting your actions, I thought it my duty to put you in mind of these things, that you might take all occasions to shew you are far from any such designs. Consider that whatever measures you take for preventing a free enquiry after truth, would be as effectual, and more consistently employ'd, in behalf of any false religion, than of the true. Will not our enemies say, that our religion is indefensible, and that we ourselves are conscious of it? And will they not gain a greater number of proselytes by this very means, than by any other? Let us act consistently with the religion we profess: and then we shall have the more reason to hope for success in our endeavours to reform the vicious.

'Tis a grief to such as have this good work seriously at heart, to see that the number of your helpers is no greater. And those who do really wish well to it, would do well to consider that it does not become them to stand neuter, while the welfare of the public is the cause in question. Indeed, when an offence is not committed immediately against ourselves, we are ready to think for the sake of our own
ease,

ease, that it does not concern us : and if we go so far as to observe that 'tis pity the offender should escape punishment, yet we are apt to fear lest we should be thought officious, if we should be the means of bringing him to it. And besides this officiousness, and the odious name of an informer, there is trouble, and often some charge, included in the necessary means of restraining vice. But tho' it becomes us in a spirit of meekness to try all other means for reclaiming the vicious, rather than be forward to punish them ; and tho' there is a tenderness due even to the guilty themselves ; yet surely we should consider what will be the consequence of suffering vice to go on without restraint. Surely men of generous tempers, whose concern for the public is disinterested, and who do in earnest lament the growth of vice, should be content to bear some trouble and expence, and despise the fear of an odious name, when the thing itself, instead of being reproachful, does really deserve praise. If among those who are engag'd in this work you think you see some disorders, (as what society in the world is there without some ?) come in, and help to rectify them : and let not your indolence, and fears, and unkind complaints, be the means of making the community suffer that inundation of vice, which will of course flow in upon it, if the REFORMING SOCIETIES are quite discourag'd.

III. Since we see that pains are taken to poison the minds of youth with false morals : we may rest assur'd, that 'tis not the mere pu-

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nothing of offenders that will answer the end to which our text directs. If we are in earnest to have the community reform'd, and the next generation better than this; we must lay the foundation in the training up of youth to virtue and a sense of religion. The good example of heads of families in their ordinary course of action, will indeed contribute much to this desirable end: but it is not sufficient of itself. There must be pains taken with the youth under their care, to establish good principles within them: for it is not enough that they are by their frame and constitution capable of virtue; since both Scripture and experience assure us that they have likewise the seeds of vice, and that they will meet with many examples which will be incitements to it. If we would have our children practise frugality, industry, temperance, chastity, justice, and benevolence, when they grow up; we ought to make them acquainted with the reasonableness of these virtues, by degrees, in their tender years. And further: if we do in earnest desire that they should in the exercise of piety towards God derive a blessing from him when they come to act for themselves; we must both teach them the fitness of it, and inure them to the practice while they are young; in which last respect social worship in the family will be of great use.

As to good instructions: the more early they are given to children, provided they be such as they are able to receive, the better will the children be defended against ill impressions.

sions. And I would entreat you not to think this advice needless : for 'tis probable that many of those whom you are means of punishing for their vices, may be the posterity of sober parents, but such as had taken very little care in their education, leaving that matter to other instructors: and as probable, that those other instructors took for granted they were under no obligation to furnish the childrens minds with any kind of knowledge besides that of languages or numbers. This you know is the way in which most of the children of one sex come abroad into action. As to the other sex: to our shame, the training them up to any useful knowledge is almost universally neglected: and therefore it is no wonder that so many of them take vicious courses, when any circumstance happens which may prove a considerable trial of their virtue. We generally indeed entertain hopes from the good dispositions of our own children : and yet if all of both sexes were as good as we imagine them to be ; what can we expect from them, if there has been no care taken to settle within them such principles as may rationally direct their practice?

And how fair an opportunity have parents, if they would attend to it, for seasoning young and tender minds with the best principles, by imperceptible degrees? We know not what thoughts very young children have, for want of trying them. And it could not fail of having good effects, if they were enquir'd of very early, what notions they have how they came forth into being ; and were inform'd, in such

a way as they could receive it, that they and all other beings are deriv'd from one common Father, and are accountable to one supreme Governor. It could not fail of being very useful, to enlarge upon the goodness of this universal Father and Governor, to inspire into the minds of youth that love which they owe him; tho' 'tis certain that such accounts of his other perfections should be given, as may create a high reverence of him. From their dependence upon and obligations to this Father and Ruler of the world, it will be no very difficult matter to deduce the obligation of shewing respect and affection to their fellow creatures, who are his children and the care of his providence as well as themselves: besides that whenever we would recommend any social virtue, we cannot be at a loss in appealing to them how fit it is that *they should do to others, as they would in the like cases wish that others should do to them*; which is our blessed Saviour's own rule, and the true explanation of the command *b to love our neighbour as ourselves*. And moreover, it is natural to caution them against indulging vicious passions, by representing to them the evils which such indulgence would certainly be attended with.

There are frequent opportunities in the hands of parents for all these purposes: frequent opportunities to instil gradually into the minds of children the reasonableness of bearing always an affectionate reverence towards God, of discovering it in the course of our actions, and

^a Mat. vii. 12.

^b Mat. xxii. 39.

of making addressees to him, by way of thankfulness for benefits receiv'd, and humble petitions for what we want: frequent opportunities for teaching them the reasonableness of the practice of righteousness and benevolence towards men, and the advantages of restraining impetuous desires. And if proper occasions were taken to furnish their minds with such kind of knowledge, there would be much the less danger of their going astray afterwards from the paths of virtue and true religion. Hereby they would be prepar'd for the practice of all the social virtues, upon rational principles; and would come into society with more ability and a better disposition to do good in it, than can with any reason be hoped for where education is neglected. And as Christianity is founded upon natural religion; there is no doubt but that children by being train'd up in such a manner, would profit the better by their catechisms; especially if their instructors would explain things as they go along.

As to family worship: it is of such importance towards keeping alive a sense of God in the minds of the whole family; that I do not wonder to see the neglect of it attended with the neglect of most other duties: whereas if this were statedly and seriously perform'd, it could not fail of making a great alteration for the better upon many accounts. The heads of families would hereby have a constant check upon themselves, restraining them from many evils, to which in the course of conversation they may be expos'd: if there were tolerable care
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used not to make religious exercises a burden, children would learn those habits of piety which would be useful to them as long as they live: and lastly, which is of more importance than some are aware; servants would reap the benefit of their master's piety, and their masters in return would be the more secure of good service from them.

If in this last case there were no other advantage than a master's seeing every evening as well as every morning all his family together, and being secure that they are not in vicious company; even that would be very considerable. And how much more rational satisfaction will it afford to be employ'd this way, than to make a practice of spending the evenings abroad? To say nothing of the children themselves; what snares and temptations are servants hereby expos'd to? those servants especially, who come young under their masters care, who enjoy privileges to which others have no claim, and to whom the masters do by contract for a number of years stand as it were in the relation of fathers. Even supposing they have had a good education at home; yet what restraint is it to be expected they will lay upon themselves, when solicited by vicious neighbours or acquaintance to spend their evenings with them, and be partakers of all their vices? Indeed there is a respect and affection due to all servants, for the sake of our common master and father: and the very relation itself of a master carries such obligations along with it, that if the servant falls into ill measures

measures by means of the master's bad conduct; he will surely be answerable for it. And whatever some masters may think, of their being under no obligation towards their servants upon a religious account; I would entreat those who have any regard to the sacred writings, to remember the high commendation given by God himself to *Abraham*, and the blessing annexed to it, *Gen. xviii. 19.* for his resolution to engage his whole family to keep the way of the Lord. *I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

I shall take up no more of your time than to observe: that if, besides the care of an exemplary conversation, heads of families made it their business to instruct their children in the principles of natural and reveal'd religion; and no other persons can be so much oblig'd to give this instruction, as themselves; if moreover they kept up the stated worship of God in the family; and especially if they join'd to it the reading some portion of Scripture, which would yield a constant supply of useful knowledge: besides the benefit their children would reap, they would gain that respect from, and have that agreeable influence upon their servants, which would have the force of a command to engage them in a regular course of life; the servants themselves, unless they were incorrigibly wicked, would be dispos'd to receive good
advice

advice from them, and the masters by practising with their children would be the better able to give it; a better conduct might be expected both from children and servants; than without such a method can be hoped for: and how much this might contribute towards a general reformation, I leave to yourselves to consider.

By God himself to Abraham, and his re-
lution to engage his whole family to keep
the way of the Lord, I know him; that he
will command his children, and his household
after him, and they shall keep the way of the
Lord, to do justly, and love mercy: that the
Lord may bring forth Abraham that which he
saith of him.

I shall take up no more of your time than to
observe: that if, besides the care of an ex-
emplary conversation, heads of families made
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